

**STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
WILDLIFE PROGRAM**

March 25, 2013

TO: Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission

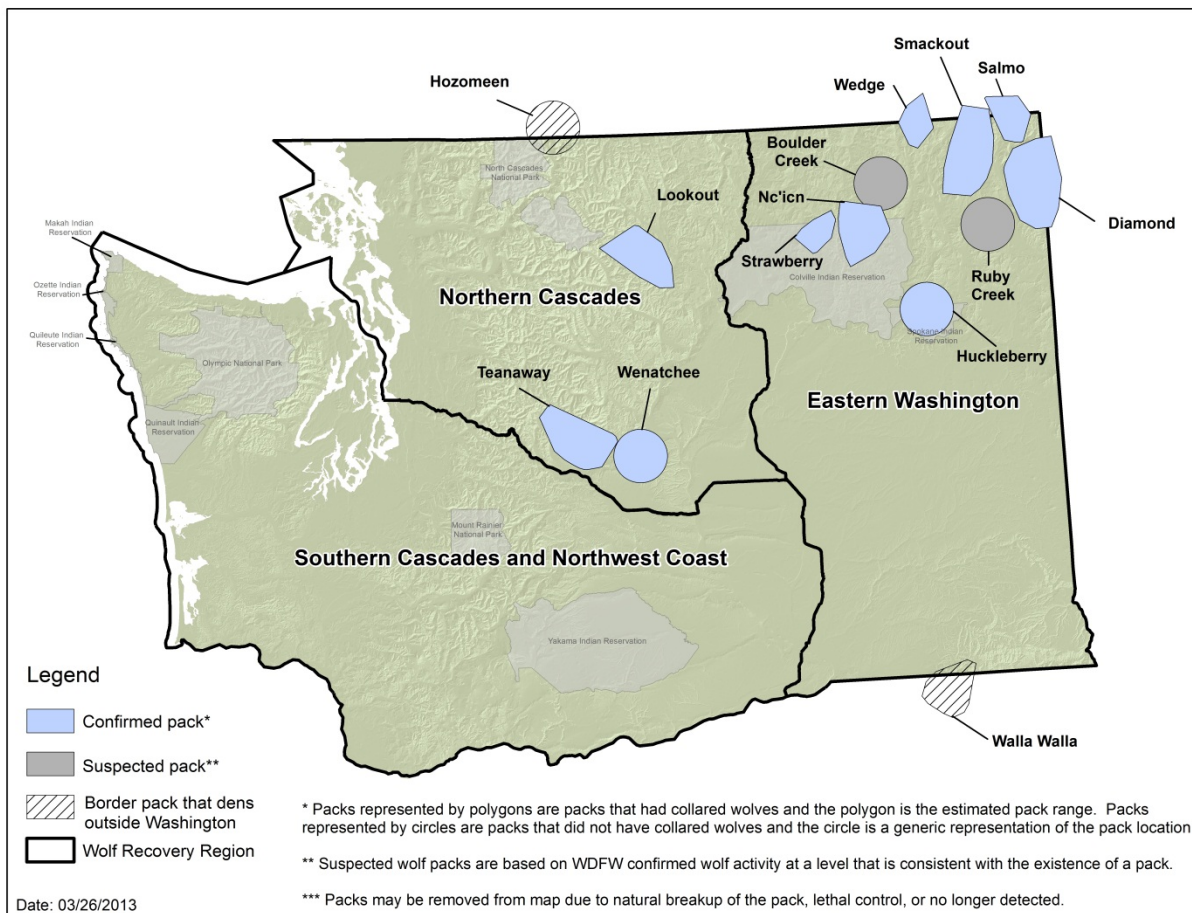
FROM: Donny Martorello, Carnivore Section Manager

SUBJECT: Wolf Conservation and Management Activities Update

The following is a compilation of wolf management activities from March 10-24, 2013.

Headquarters

A new wolf pack, the Wenatchee Pack, was confirmed just east of the Teanaway Pack (see Region 2 report below). Two wolves traveling together were confirmed via a remote camera photograph on March 24, 2013. We suspect the dispersing female from the Teanaway pack (with red ear tags) is one of the members of the Wenatchee pack. There has also been other documented wolf activity in the area consistent with the movement patterns of a pack.



Depredation Training, March 19, Ellensburg -

Twenty-five participants registered for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Depredation training held in Ellensburg on March 19. Participants represented five different organizations including Spokane Tribe, Walla Walla County Sheriff, U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services, U.S. Forest Service Law Enforcement, and WDFW (biologists and law enforcement). Carnivore Section Manager Dr. Donny Martorello provided a presentation on the current status of wolves, the state wolf management plan, and the WDFW response process. Wolf Specialist Carter Niemeyer and Dr. Kristin Mansfield (DVM WDFW) discussed prevention measures, other forms of injury/mortality (non-predator injury/mortality), investigator safety, tools, evidence of carnivore predation, and accurate data collection. Additionally, Biologist Scott Becker provided an elk carcass for the participants to gain “hands on” experience in verifying depredation under the direction of Carter Niemeyer and Dr. Mansfield. The elk was reported to WDFW as a possible depredation. The participants were provided background information on the location and the reporting individual’s account. The participants then conducted an investigation of the carcass by removing the hide and looking for evidence of predation. Final conclusion: non-depredation.



Wolf Biologist Scott Becker preparing Depredation Training class for hands-on investigation of elk carcass.

Region 1

March 17-23, 2013

District 1: Conflict Specialist Shepherd and Private Lands Access Technician Bendixen installed fladry around a calving operation on Deep Creek in the vicinity of the Smackout wolf pack. The radio-collared individuals of the Smackout wolf pack were detected while installing fladry. Carcasses of adult cows, which died from natural causes, and a calf, which died from unknown non-predatory causes, although the calf was scavenged by ravens and eagles, were observed and investigated. Fladry was installed around the carcasses as well. Also discussed were carcass disposal and location of calving pasture. A meeting was held to discuss the Smackout pack range-rider program with funding partners and grazing allotment permit holders. Contracts were discussed as well as sharing of locations of radio-collared wolves, wolf behavior, and equipment needed.



Cattle in a calving operation now surrounded by electrified fladry (close-up below) west of Smackout Meadows along Deep Creek. Wolves from the Smackout pack were heard with a telemetry receiver while installing fladry.



Conflict Specialist Shepherd attended depredation training taught by Carter Niemeyer and Dr. Kristin Mansfield (WDFW) in Ellensburg.



Hematoma on the spine of an elk carcass was inspected by Carter Niemeyer and a Walla Walla County Sheriff's Department employee.

District 3: District Biologist Wik was contacted by a local reporter for the Lewiston Tribune about a report of wolves in the Blue Mountains. Apparently, at the Asotin County Commissioners meeting this past week, somebody informed the commissioners that there were five wolf packs inhabiting the Washington Blue Mountains. The reporter was given current information and Wik will try to contact the commissioners in the near future to provide accurate information.

Biologist Rasley met with a cattleman on the North Touchet River in Columbia County regarding our Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) livestock contract. After our meeting we were able to complete our new DPCA Livestock contract.

Biologist Rasley attended the mandatory Wolf/Livestock training in Ellensburg this week. The training was very helpful and included a necropsy on an adult bull elk.

March 10-16, 2013

District 1: Conflict Specialist Shepherd discussed wolves, wolf management, food storage, butchering of carcasses, and carcass disposal with U.S. Air Force personnel. Wolves were within 50 yards of their training camp within the last few days, which is in use by students. A carcass that was buried at the end of January was dug up and had coyote scat and wolf tracks at the site

(see photos). Air horns and other hazing devices were offered and discussed as firearm use is not allowed in non-emergency situations.



U.S Air Force personnel observe wolf tracks just below the survival training camp north of Smackout Meadows.



Wolf track found 50 yards from U.S Air Force survival training camp north of Smackout Meadows.



U.S Air Force survival training camp north of Smackout Meadows taken at a wolf track made within last few days (above). Carcass burial site partially caved in by students after a tunnel was dug by an animal at the same U.S Air Force survival training camp (below).





Wolf track at carcass burial site at the U.S Air Force survival training camp north of Smackout Meadows.

Conflict Specialist Shepherd participated in a conference call with Olympia and Okanogan Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) personnel concerning a wolf attack on a dog in the Lookout pack territory. Conflict Specialist Shepherd and Officer Erickson planned a snowmobile trip during the coming weekend into Ruby Creek where numerous recent wolf sightings have occurred above ranches along the Pend Oreille River. Conflict Specialist Shepherd and Private Lands Access Technician Bendixen discussed wolf management issues and hazing with a cattle producer in southwestern Stevens County near known Huckleberry pack territory. Several acres of fenced area near the house were surrounded by electrified fladry for a night pasture for cow/calf pairs apart from the 40 acre day use area.



Electrified fladry surrounds a barnyard and multiple barns on a ranch near known Huckleberry wolf pack territory.

Reports of wolves in Ewan

Wolf Sighting: An Ewan resident stopped by McCanna's office to report a wolf sighting a half-mile east of Ewan on Sunday. McCanna gave the resident information to report the animal which was close to an alfalfa field which has around 50 deer in it on any given night. Biologist Atamian reviewed the reports from the public (via the online reporting site) and found only two reports for the general area.

Dog killed by coyote: McCanna was contacted on Sunday by a homeowner nine miles east of St. John who had let their bull terrier out when they heard a commotion and their dog was later found lying in a puddle of blood behind their house in a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) area. McCanna investigated the site and the dog was killed by a coyote.

Region 2

March 18-24, 2013

Chelan County: On Monday, March 18 we received a report of a dead bull elk in a pond with wolf tracks surrounding the pond in Pitcher Canyon southwest of Wenatchee. Biologist Volsen responded and there were no obvious outward signs of wolf attack other than a puncture, and the wound appeared more as scavenging than wolf attack. The family wanted the elk removed from the ranch so it was loaded into Biologist Volsen's truck and was taken to Wenatchee.



Bull elk removed from the farm pond in Pitcher Canyon.

The opportunity presented itself to provide the elk to the wolf depredation training that was taking place in Ellensburg on March 19, so Biologist Becker took the elk to Ellensburg where he, Dr. Mansfield and Carter Niemeyer did a necropsy on the elk. The cause of death was undetermined; however, there was no evidence of carnivore involvement. The elk was estimated to be 8- 10 years old, and showed signs of having had a previous trauma and resulting injuries. The wound on the rump was consistent with a scavenging event and not the result of a wolf attack while the animal was alive. A neighbor in Pitcher Canyon had also gotten a picture of a wolf on their trail camera a few days before this incident was reported. Biologists Becker, Volsen and Gallie looked at the image and could not tell if it was the same or a different wolf captured on camera in November 2012.



A puncture inside the rear leg of this wounded elk is pointed out.

Biologist Volsen and Becker had subsequent discussions with the family about the incident and what it might mean to their ranch to have wolves near. They also showed us an image of another dead bull elk that had been consumed, and told us they had placed a trail camera near the carcass.

On Sunday, March 24 Biologist Volsen received a phone call from the ranch family in Pitcher Canyon saying that they had recovered images of two wolves on the bull elk carcass. Images sent confirmed two wolves, and that one of the wolves was suspected to be the same wolf photographed in the Entiat earlier in the month. Red tags in the ear and the coloration of the wolf appear to be the same, with Biologist Becker having the same opinion.

The other landowner in the canyon that recorded images of wolves previously also recorded images of what we think are these two wolves. However, we have not been able to view these images yet. At this point we are working with the ranch to gain access and to collect more information on the number of animals.



Two wolves in Pitcher Canyon (date/time stamp is incorrect). The ear tag can be seen in the right ear of the wolf in the foreground.

Wolf Management: Biologist Fitkin and Officer Day responded to a reported possible wolf depredation on a goat near Davis Lake in Okanogan County. No wolf or wolf sign was observed. Evidence on site indicated a cougar killed the animal shortly before the owner discovered it missing. Members of Biologist Beausoleil's crew with assistance from Enforcement staff followed up with efforts aimed at capturing, collaring and moving the animal. Depredation forms are forthcoming.

March 11-17, 2013

On Friday afternoon, Biologist Fitkin and Officer McCormick responded to a reported wolf depredation on livestock on Aeneas Valley Road in Okanogan County. No wolf or wolf sign was observed. An old cow carcass of unknown origin or ownership was at the site and may have died of natural causes, possibly winter kill. A two-inch deep abscess in the jaw would have made it difficult to eat. Reporting party mentioned wolf because of scat at the site that turned out to most likely be coyote, although it was collected. The carcass was scavenged by a variety of smaller critters (particularly birds). The caller found it on his property and thought there was wolf scat nearby. The skeletal system was mostly intact, and it appeared the animal had lay down and died at the spot sometime prior to, or during the winter. There were no signs in the hide that indicated the animal had been taken down by any predator. Predation forms are forthcoming.